

# MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING - TOWARDS A SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF MARITIME SPACE

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In recent years, marine spatial planning (MSP) has gained considerable importance as a new paradigm towards ecosystem-based management for marine areas. While various countries have already implemented marine spatial plans, others are currently creating legislation or new policy frameworks that will enable MSP in the near future. MSP has also generated interest among Arctic countries and High Seas experts, as a promising means to conserve valuable marine areas while simultaneously achieving social and economic objectives. A central problem and potential impediment for the future success of MSP, however, lies in the lack of understanding what MSP is really about, what it entails to produce valuable outcomes, and how it is linked to other management approaches. Once adequate authority is in place, for example, MSP should be conducted as an adaptive, participatory, ecosystem-based, integrated and future-oriented management process, not a one-time plan. Despite the considerable work that has been done so far to define the concept of MSP, a number of research gaps remain. This presentation will illustrate three essential research gaps, all of them reflecting challenges that lie ahead which, once addressed, could substantially improve the future application of MSP around the world.